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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 7 July 1994 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/155, I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a statement dated 6 July 1994 from the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation "on the adoption of the law on citizenship by the Saeima of the Latvian Republic".

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under item 104 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Y. VORONTSOV

* A/49/50/Rev.1.

ANNEX

Statement dated 6 July 1994 from the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation "on the adoption of the law on citizenship by the Saeima of the Latvian Republic"

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation expresses profound alarm about the adoption of the law on citizenship by the Saeima of the Latvian Republic. This law, which affects the fate of hundreds of thousands of persons, contains a number of provisions that are unacceptable to civilized countries and directly infringe the rights of national minorities, first of all the Russian-speaking population in Latvia.

The decision by the Latvian Parliament represents a challenge to the international community. The principle of non-discrimination, laid down in basic international legal human rights documents, has been violated. Many recommendations by the Council of Europe, the High Commissioner of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) on matters relating to national minorities and international experts have been ignored. A quota system for granting citizenship that runs counter to international practice has been legislated.

Arbitrarily depriving more than a third of the inhabitants of Latvia of citizenship and restricting their political, economic, social and cultural rights are still further evidence of the continuation of the policy of driving inhabitants - the representatives of "undesirable" nationalities - out of Latvia. Such a course is fraught with the gravest consequences.

The State Duma, taking into account the decision by the President of Latvia to refer the law on citizenship for reconsideration by the Saeima, calls upon Latvian members of Parliament to reject the discriminatory policy. Now is the time to return to the proposals to grant the right to acquire Latvian citizenship to all the country's permanent residents on the basis of their free choice and submission of the corresponding applications within a period to be established under the law on citizenship. Only such a decision would be fully in keeping with the spirit and letter of contemporary norms of international law and the aspirations of those people who have linked their fate to Latvia.

The deputies of the State Duma call upon the parliaments and Governments of European countries to take all measures to induce the Latvian Parliament to revise radically the discriminatory provisions of the law on citizenship. Failing to act in such a situation or being satisfied with cosmetic amendments would amount to connivance with the forces of aggressive nationalism that are creating a hotbed of national discord in the Baltic region. In this matter, as in others as well, we expect honesty, a commitment to democratic principles and consistency on the part of our European partners. Remaining silent and, even more, adhering to double standards in this situation are inadmissible.

The State Duma declares that it will consistently defend the interests of the Russian-speaking population, firmly reject any attempts to discriminate

against it, and promote efforts to improve the legal and social status of fellow-countrymen abroad. The State Duma confirms its readiness to facilitate acquisition of Russian citizenship by all citizens of the former Soviet Union who are so interested.

The actions by the State Duma aimed at developing relations between Russia and Latvia, including the establishment of a basis for them founded on laws and treaties, will be very closely linked to normalization of the legal status of the Russian-speaking population in Latvia and complete observance of their political, economic, social and cultural rights.